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Officials expect terrorism to find way to U.S. shores

By Jim Mulvaney
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NEW YORK — Law enforcement, intelligence and diplomatic officials studying violence say that although they have no hard evidence, they expect international terrorism to expand from attacks on Americans overseas to bombings, hijackings and other acts of violence in the United States.

"International terrorism will soon breach our shores," Thomas Sheer, the deputy assistant director of the FBI, said last week at a news conference sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

The focus of the news conference was on Palestinian activity — especially against Israel and American Jews. But Sheer stressed that the U.S. government's concern went well beyond that and included groups from places as widespread as Ireland, Spain and southern Africa.

Despite the government's concern about the growth of terrorism, officials interviewed over the last several weeks said no feasible plan had been formed to eliminate it, here or abroad. Even the FBI, which takes much of the credit for cutting domestic terrorist activities from 31 incidents in 1983 to seven this year, is not convinced that it will be able to prevent further outbreaks.

"I don't believe we've done away with domestic terrorism," said Sheer. "What we have done is to incarcerate the current crop."

Indigenous groups

Most of the terrorist activity in the United States has involved indigenous groups — the Weathermen, the Black Liberation Army, the Jewish Defense League and the United Freedom Front, an anarchist group currently on trial in Brooklyn for a series of bombings, including several on Long Island. Other major groups with foreign connections, such as the anti-Castro Omega 7 and the Puerto Rican FALN, are regarded as domestic terrorists because they are based locally.

Sheer and others said they believed that the United States was overdue for attacks from foreign groups. They said no hard evidence was available but insisted that a number of factors — including worldwide growth in anti-American sentiment, a relatively open border, freedom of movement within the country and the number of potential targets, such as foreign missions and multinational corporations — convince them that such attacks are inevitable.

Government officials contend that the United States has escaped the variety of terrorist activity that has hit other parts of the world through a combination of law enforcement, luck and a national aversion to political violence.

Terrorism and repression

"There is no general appeal in any terrorist philosophy," Sheer said, explaining that most terrorism involves what the participants view as legitimate struggles against repressive regimes or colonial powers.

Most of the world's terrorism is related to the Middle East and the contention of Palestinian groups that they have been robbed of their homeland. More than 40 percent of the terrorist incidents over the last several years have been in Western Europe, according to State Department figures.

But, according to those figures, one-quarter of the incidents in Europe have been related to the Middle East, such as the Oct. 7 hijacking of the cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and the murder of passenger Leon Klinghoffer by the Palestinian hijackers, who identified themselves as members of the Palestine Liberation Front, a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The rest of the incidents in Europe involved local groups — notably the Irish Republican Army and its Protestant counterpart, the Ulster Freedom Fighters; ETA, the Basque separatist group in northern Spain and southern France, and anarchist groups such as the Red Brigades in Italy and the Baader-Meinhoff Gang in West Germany.

About 35 percent of the world's incidents of terrorism take place in the Middle East, according to the State Department. The next area is Central America, which accounts for about 15 percent of the incidents. The remaining 10 percent is spread throughout the rest of the world.

The State Department said there were 600 terrorist incidents worldwide in 1984, an increase of 20 percent over five years. In the first several months of this year, there were 570 incidents, an increase of 35 percent over the same period in 1984.

Terrorism is expected to continue increasing worldwide. "The trajectory is upward," said Brian Jenkins, a consultant for the Rand Corp. who recently published a study on the topic. "Terrorism has become bloodier, and we will see an increasing number of large-scale indiscriminate attacks."

Government officials say their biggest concern remains foreign terrorism in which Americans are targets or unwitting victims.

In 1984, Congress passed laws instructing the FBI to investigate all foreign terrorism against U.S. citizens abroad. So far, the agency has made no prosecutions but has obtained warrants for people involved in the June 14 hijacking of a TWA plane from the Athens, Greece, airport as well as Mohammed Abul Abbas, the alleged mastermind of the

Achille Lauro hijacking.

Government officials say that the problem is not as widespread as is generally perceived. One intelligence official said that the more than two million U.S. citizens who live outside the country and the countless more travel abroad each year are relatively safe.

"I think the odds for hitting the New York state lottery are better than the odds for getting hit in a terror attack," the intelligence official said.

Nevertheless, the government is in the middle of a \$3.5 billion program to upgrade security at U.S. buildings overseas and has instituted mandatory security training for all officials posted overseas.

"It isn't just on terrorism, but also street crimes and other kinds of violence," an official said. "We do advise them not to travel in large groups or frequent places with an obvious American connection. With civilians, it is different. How do you advise civilians not to go around wearing cowboy hats or with blue hair?"